ELK ANNUAL SURVEY AND INVENTORY PERFORMANCE REPORT

STATE: Alaska **GRANT AND SEGMENT NR.:** W-27-4
PROJECT NR.: 13.0

WORK LOCATION: Statewide

PROJECT LOCATIONS: Game Management Regions 1 and 2

PROJECT TITLE: The Status of Alaska Elk and Factors Influencing Their Population

PERIOD: 1 July 2000–30 June 2001

The Status of Alaska Elk and Factors Influencing Their Population in Region I

Regionwide Activities

Write an annual survey and inventory performance report. This draft satisfies the activity as described.

Provide information to the Board of Game on elk management. During fall 2000 Region I staff provided detailed information to the Board on elk population information and harvest trends, notably that of Etolin Island. The Board adopted a new season for Units 1, 2, and 3 (exclusive of the Etolin and Zarembo islands drawing permit hunt area), lengthened the Etolin/Zarembo archery-only season, and increased the number of drawing permits from 70 to 120 for the Etolin/Zarembo season.

Units 1A, 1B, 2 and a portion of Unit 3

Monitor for the presence of elk in southern Southeast Alaska through contact with deer, elk, and bear hunters. Ketchikan and Petersburg area staff opportunistically spoke with deer and black bear hunters to gain an understanding of elk sightings and gather information on elk dispersal in southern Southeast Alaska.

Unit 3

Monitor the Unit 3 Etolin/Zarembo islands elk hunt and analyze the permit report data. The Petersburg Assistant Area Biologist and other staff contacted hunters before and after their hunts. Hunt-based parameters were evaluated by the use of drawing permits, incisors, and photos of antlers submitted by hunters.

Conduct spring fecal pellet-group surveys on Etolin Island. No pellet-group surveys were conducted specifically for elk during the regulatory year, however deer pellet-group surveys were conducted on the east side of Etolin Island. Observers looked for any elk sign along the deer transects.

Monitor browse condition at established exclosures. There were no browse surveys conducted of the Etolin Island exclosures during the regulatory year.

Use established population-modeling techniques to estimate population growth. Established modeling techniques were used during the year to estimate elk population growth and the carrying capacity of Etolin Island. The results were used not only for Board of Game deliberations, but in discussing elk management options with Southeast hunters.

Regional Segment Period Project Costs: $18.6

The Status of Alaska Elk and Factors Influencing Their Populations in Region II

Regionwide Activities

Activity 1: Write an annual elk survey and inventory performance report.

Activity 2: Prepare an elk management report.

The next draft elk management report will be completed during spring 2002.

Activity 3: Provide information to the Board of Game on elk management.

One elk proposal was addressed by the Board of Game during its spring 2001 meeting.

Activities by Mountain Range and Unit

Unit 8

Activity 1: Conduct aerial sex and age population composition surveys to determine status, trends, productivity, and mortality of elk.

We completed aerial composition surveys for a portion of the herds, recovered 3 GPS collars, and deployed 6 new radio collars on adult female elk in 2000. Survey results suggested declines in most of the herds, with the unitwide population estimated at 865 elk.

The elk population declined substantially from 1,400 animals in 1997 to further reduction of 865 animals in 2000. The reported 2000 harvest of 67 elk was about 8% of the estimated population; harsh weather played a role in the decrease of harvest. This was the second decline in the number of elk harvested after 5 consecutive years of increases.

Activity 2: Monitor elk seasonal distribution through relocation of radio-collared elk.

Before 1998, the annual home ranges of most of the elk herds were relatively stable with little interchange between herds. Recent data indicate considerable mixing of herds and changes in traditional use areas during the winter and early spring. We suspect many of these changes are because of significant alteration to winter ranges by commercial logging operations and/or increased severity of winter/early spring weather. Recovery and analysis of movement data from the GPS collars deployed in 1999 has helped in determining the extent of these changes.

Activity 3: Monitor the elk harvest through field observations, hunter harvest reports, and contact with hunters.

Mandatory permit reports returned by hunters provided data on hunting effort and harvest. We issued 510 drawing permits and 431 registration permits. Hunters reported harvesting 67 elk (27 males, 40 females). The harvest by permit hunt was as follows:

Raspberry Island drawing permit hunt	2 males
Southeastern Afognak drawing permit hunt	8 males, 19 females;
Southeastern Afognak registration permit hunt	6 males, 8 females;
Northern Afognak registration permit hunt	13 males, 11 females.

We issued 1 emergency order to close portions of registration hunts RE753 (north and west of a line from the head of Muskomee bay to the head of Malina Bay) on 27 October 2000, and RE754 (north and west of a line from Paramanof and Malina Bays) on 31 October 2000. The ranges of the Malina and Marka Lake herds were included in the closure. These areas received greater pressure than usual due to increased hunter effort on lands not subject to newly imposed access fees on some Native owned lands.

The total harvest from drawing and registration permit hunts by herd for Afognak Island was as follows:

Duck Mountain	13
Portage Lake	8
Seal Bay	0
Marka Lake	24
Waterfall Lake	1
Malina Lakes/Afognak Lake	19

Other activities funded by Federal Aid on this project:

None.

Statewide Segment Period Project Costs:

Fiscal year		Statewide			
2000–2001	I	II	III	V	Total
Actual	18.6	22.4			41.0